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DE RUEH UJA #0479/01 0581700  
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O 271700Z FEB 06  
FM AMEMBASSY ABUJA  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4741  
INFO RUEHZO/AFRICAN UNION COLLECTIVE  
RUEAUSA/DEPT OF HHS WASHDC  
RHFMISS/CDR USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE  
RUEHRO/USMISSION UN ROME 0043  
RUFOADA/JAC MOLESWORTH RAF MOLESWORTH UK  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC  
RUEKDIA/DIA WASHDC  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC//USDP/ASD-HD//  
RUEHPPH/CDC ATLANTA GA  
RUEHRC/DEPT OF AGRICULTURE WASHDC

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 ABUJA 000479

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FOR OES NANCY POWELL  
USDA FOR FAS/OA, FAS/DLP, FAS/ICD AND FAS/ITP  
USDA ALSO FOR APHIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [TBIO](#) [KFLU](#) [EAID](#) [AMED](#) [EAGR](#) [NI](#)

SUBJECT: FEB 23 NIGERIA AVIAN FLU UPDATE

REF: ABUJA 449

11. Summary. A GON official said Nigeria did not have surveillance information on free-range chickens, which may be a greater threat to unaffected zones than commercial chicken farms. He cautioned implicitly against the GON's taking stern action against these farmers, saying, "This is the livelihood of the people." The World Bank will provide a credit worth USD 50 million for a Nigeria AI Emergency Control, Preparedness, and Response Project. At a seminar organized by the Animal Science Association of Nigeria, participants asserted Nigeria's AI outbreak is likely a conspiracy to destroy Nigeria's poultry sector, to end the country's ban on poultry imports. End summary.

12. At the Feb. 23 a briefing at the Government of Nigeria's (GON) Avian Crisis Management Center, a GON official said the confirmed report of avian influenza (AI) in Zamfara State was not yet finalized. The GON might change Zamfara's status to "at risk." A Feb. 22 GON "avian flu update" reported that Nigeria has experienced no new confirmed cases of AI since February 18. A GON official clarified, however, that this meant AI has been detected in no additional states but that cases are spreading to additional farms in states such as Kano that already had confirmed cases.

No information on free-range chickens  
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13. A GON official said Nigeria did not have surveillance information on free-range chickens. He cautioned implicitly against the GON's taking stern action against these farmers, saying, "This is the livelihood of the people." An international expert noted that free-range chickens likely were a greater threat to unaffected zones in Nigeria than were commercial chicken farms. A GON official replied only that the agricultural sector should provide to the government more information about this situation. The FAO estimates that in Nigeria, backyard farmers account for 60% of all poultry producers, commercial farmers for 25%, and semi-commercial farmers for 15%.

14. The World Bank, working with the Ministries of Agriculture and Health, concluded its appraisal of a Nigeria AI Emergency Control, Preparedness, and Response Project to be financed with a credit equivalent to USD 50 million. Of

this, USD 18 million will be used for human protection, USD 27 million for agricultural protection, and USD 5 million for communications. The World Bank and the GON planned to sign the accord on Feb. 24.

Poultry farms perceive a "conspiracy" against them  
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15. A Lagos Consulate FAS employee attended on Feb. 22 in Lagos a seminar on AI organized by the Animal Science Association of Nigeria. While participants provided no quantitative measure of losses to the industry, they said the AI outbreak in northern Nigeria was devastating the country's poultry industry, as huge losses mount every day. Participants maintained there were no AI outbreaks in southwestern Nigeria, where Nigeria's commercial poultry production is concentrated.

16. Participants blamed the Nigerian press and the GON for not managing better reports on AI, considering the size and importance of the sector. Most participants considered the outbreak a conspiracy to destroy Nigeria's poultry sector. They said the way the international press is covering the AI situation in Nigeria has commercial implications targeted at pressuring the GON to lift its ban on poultry imports. The participants urged poultry farmers in southwestern Nigeria to resist monitoring groups from visiting their farms and destroying their birds. They instead called on farmers to intensify bio-safety measures on their farms, including restricting the movement of people, materials, and birds in and out of the farms.

17. Representatives of the Lagos State Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives detailed the measures they have

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put in place to control the outbreak of the disease in the state. These include setting up control posts at the city's entry points to check the traffic of poultry and eggs into the state; printing posters to educate farmers on important biosafety measures; establishing telephone hotlines to report any case relating to the AI outbreak; and dividing Lagos State into six monitoring zones (Lekki, Obalende, Ikorodu, Epe, Agege and Badagry) for rapid response. The event's organizers handed out to attendees, at no charge, cooked eggs, but the consulate employee observed no attendee eating them.

CAMPBELL